

HONORING SACRIFICE AND COMMITMENT OF OUR NATION'S VETERANS

N. Billyjack, ADC #121747

1st Special Forces

De Oppresso Liber

Tucson Complex

Why should anyone honor the commitment and sacrifice of American soldiers and veterans?

After all, how can anyone who wasn't there, who didn't go through it themselves, relate to what it's like to be a soldier who loves his country and what it stands for enough to willingly endure the uncertainty and confusion of combat? Or to see your best friend, often the guy standing next to you, lose their arm, leg or life in an unexpected instant? To be cut off from your supply lines, wondering after weeks of hunger if you'll ever have a normal meal again. Holding your ground on the side of a freezing mountain in the middle of winter without a coat. Often you find yourself suddenly in the middle of an intense "fire fight" with so many bullets whizzing by your head from every direction at the same time that you think you've stumbled into a swarm of bees. Then you feel the warm blood on your skin and realize you've been hit. You experience the fireball of an explosive from the inside getting your eyelashes and eyebrows burnt off. You get shot eight times in a single battle and try frantically to get the bleeding stopped while being carried over someone's shoulder as they run firing their weapon as fast as possible trying to keep you both alive long enough to get to safety. You look up to see a wall of fire from bombs dropped so close that the heat melts the Hershey bar in your shirt pocket. The shockwave knocks you down and you're deaf for hours from the ringing in your ears caused by the bang of the explosion. Then, after being overrun by sixty to one, you're taken prisoner of war and kept in solitary confinement for years, taken out only for the routine beatings and torture, being laid face down, having your hands tied behind your back at the waist, then pushed up, up, up until your shoulders dislocate as your hands finally reach a point straight above your head – over and over and over. Having constant open sores from being forced to sleep only on concrete or steel, bleeding at every joint and contact point.

You survive, maybe in one piece, to return home to the way of life you so dearly value, to the safe land of freedom that you suffered, fought and sacrificed so much for – for your family and every American. You come back to a wife, children and even parents who see you as almost a stranger. You're no longer that innocent kid who went off to defend our country. You look at your children and remember all those you tried to save but couldn't, those innocent ones who needlessly lost their limbs or their precious little lives.

You wonder if it was all for nothing, all in vain, does anyone care? It's always good to let the veteran know that there is someone who benefits, someone who appreciates the freedom they have and that the soldiers' sacrifice has a value to others.

I was there! These are some of my memories of things that happened to me and so many others.

Anytime anyone says "thank you" on Veterans Day, it really touches my heart.